

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

----- 110031

O R 261033Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4166

INFO SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK IMMEDIATE

USDEL JEC PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU IMMEDIATE

USSAG NKP THAILAND IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DA NANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 3550

EXDIS-MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

NOFORN

WARNING--SENSITIVE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES AND METHODS

INVOLVED/NO FOREIGN DISSEMINATION

E.O. 11652: XGDS. DECLASSIFICATION DATE IMPOSSIBLE TO

DETERMINE

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJECT: HIGHLIGHTS OF NVA OFFENSIVE--SUMMARY FOR

PERIOD ENDING NOON MARCH 26.

1. GENERAL

IN MR1, ELEMENTS OF THE 1ST DIVISION AND THE 147TH MARINE
BRIGADE ARE CONTINUING TO MAKE THEIR WAY TOWARD DA NANG FROM HUE.
THEY ARE EXPERIENCING SEVERE PROBLEMS APPROXIMATELY ONE THIRD OF
THE WAY TO DA NANG, AND THE MARINE BRIGADE IS THE ONLY UNIT
REMAINING WITH ANY UNIT INTEGRITY. SEVERE PROBLEMS WITH THE
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EVACUATION OF THE 2ND DIVISION FROM CHU LAI HAVE ALSO ARISEN. PUBLIC

ORDER IN DA NANG, BOTH AMONG SOLDIERS AND CIVILIANS, IS BEGINNING TO BREAK DOWN. IN MR2, PORTIONS OF THE PLEIKU/KONTUM CONVOY REACHED ROUTE 1, BUT ONLY ABOUT 60,000 HAVE REACHED SAFETY. AN ESTIMATED 100,000 ARE STRANDED ALONG THE PHU YEN/PHU BON BORDER WITH LITTLE PROSPECT OF ESCAPE. UNITS INCLUDING THE 3RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE, UNDER THE COMMAND OF THE 23RD DIVISION ARE GUARDING THE ROUTE 21 APPROACH TO NHA TRANG, AND TWO BATTALIONS OF THE 40TH REGT. ARE GUARDING THE WESTERN APPROACHES. IN MR3, THE NVA/VC HAVE BEEN PUSHED AWAY FROM ROUTE 22. HEAVY SHELLING IS IN PROGRESS AROUND TAY NINH, AND HARASSMENT ALONG ROUTE 1 IN LONG KHANH CONTINUES. THE SITUATION REMAINS UNCHANGED IN MR4. RUMORS OF A GVN/"PRG" DEAL FOR THE SAFETY OF REFUGEES HAVE BEEN PROVEN FALSE BY WIDESPREAD NVA ATTACKS ON THE REFUGEES IN BOTH MRS 1 AND 2.

MR1

THE 1ST DIVISION AND THE 147TH MARINE BRIGADE EVACUATING OVERLAND FROM HUE TO DA NANG HAVE RUN INTO DIFFICULTY ABOUT ONE THIRD OF THE WAY TO DA NANG. A BRIDGE TO BE INSTALLED AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE CAU HAI LAGOON TO FACILITATE THEIR PASSAGE HAS NOT BEEN CONSTRUCTED, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE EXFILTRATING 1ST DIVISION TROOPS COMMANDERED TWO BOATS CARRYING PART OF THE BRIDGE. THE MARINE BRIGADE IS THE ONLY UNIT TO MAINTAIN UNIT INTEGRITY. EQUIPMENT LOSSES IN NORTHERN MR 1 WERE HEAVY, AND INCLUDE AT LEAST 4 175MM GUNS, AND 39 M-48 TANKS WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN DESTROYED. AN ATTEMPT TO EVACUATE THE MARINES BY SEA THE NIGHT OF 25-26 MARCH FAILED DUE TO HEAVY SEAS.

IN SOUTHERN MR 1, ATTEMPTS TO EVACUATE THE 2ND DIVISION FROM CHU LAI RESULTED IN MASS PANIC AS A RUSH TO BOARD THE FIRST FEW BOATS CAUSED COMMANDERS TO LOSE CONTROL OF THEIR UNITS. SEVERAL SOLDIERS DIED IN THE RESULTING PANIC.

PUBLIC ORDER IN DA NANG IS BEGINNING TO BREAK DOWN, LARGE NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS, OVER WHOM THERE IS LITTLE COMMAND, HAVE CIVILIAN S ON THE VERGE OF PANIC, AND SOME POLICE ARE BEGINNING TO EXHIBIT SIGNS OF PANIC AS WELL.

MR2

LEAD ELEMENTS OF PLEIKU/KONTUM CONVOY HAVE REACHED ROUTE 1 ON ROUGHLY 1,500 VEHICLES AND ARE NOW MOVING SOUTH TOWARD NHA
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TRANG. THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO HAVE REACHED SAFETY IS ESTIMATED

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AT 60,000. HOWEVER, APPROXIMATELY 100,000 ARE STRANDED ALONG THE PHU YEN/PHU BON BORDER BY VEHICLE BREAKDOWNS OR COMMUNIST ACTION, AND THEIR CHANCES OF REACHING SAFETY ARE BLEAK. THE CAMP AREA NEAR THE SONG BA RIVER CROSSING WAS HEAVILY SHELLED BY NVA MORTARS AND IS BURING. ESTIMATES OF VEHICLES DESTROYED THERE RUN AS HIGH AS 1,500.

ELEMENTS, INCLUDING THE 3RD AIRBORNE BRIGADE DEFENDING DAU CAU PASS, UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE 23RD DIVISION COMMAND ARE GUARDING THE ROUTE 1 APPROACH TO NHA TRANG. TWO BATTALIONS OF THE 40TH REGT. ARE DEFENDING THE WESTERN APPROACH TO THE CITY. AN UNCONFIRMED REPORT HAS NVA TANKS SIGHTED IN THIS AREA. TWO RF BNS. AND FIVE RF COMPANIES ARE DEFENDING NHA TRANG ITSELF.

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TROOP MORALE IN MR 2 IS CRITICALLY LOW.

MR3

GVN FORCES DISLODGED THE NVA FROM THE POSITION ASTRIDE ROUTE 22 NEAR TRA VO MARCH 25. HEAVY SHELLING IS UNDER WAY AROUND TAY NINH, AND NVA/VC FORCES ARE CONTINUING TO PRESS THEIR ATTACKS ON ROUTE 26 TO THE NORTH OF ROUTE 22. GVN FORCES ARE HOLDING FIRM AND NVA CASUALTIES HAVE BEEN HEAVY. ACTIVITY HAS NOT RENEWED AT CHON THANH FOLLOWING HEAVY NVA LOSSES, AND MR 3 HEADQUARTERS IS PLEASED WITH THE PERFORMANCE OF THE 5TH DIVISION IN EVACUATING TROOPS AND EQUIPMENT FROM AN LOC IN AN ORDERLY MANNER.

IN THE EAST, NVA/VC HARASSMENT ALONG ROUTE 1 IN LONG KHANH CONTINUES.

MR4

THE SITUATION IS UNCHANGED IN MR 4. MILITARY EVENTS IN THE NORTHERN PART OF VIET-NAM HAVE HAD AN EFFECT ON MORALE IN THE DELTA. MILITARY MORALE HAS SUFFERED SOMEWHAT, PARTICULARLY IN THE LOWER RANKS, BUT THE MOST APPARENT EFFECT HAS BEEN IN THE CIVILIAN SECTOR.

NVA ACTS AGAINST REFUGEES

WIDESPREAD RUMORS OF A "DEAL" BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND THE GVN HAVE BEEN PROVEN FALSE BY REPEATED ACTS OF TERRORISM DIRECTED AGAINST CIVILIANS FLEEING THE COMMUNISTS. SOME EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

1. COMMUNIST GUNNERS FIRED 14 122 MM ROCKETS AT DA NANG AIR BASE MARCH 26. MOST OF THE ROCKETS IMPACTED IN CIVILIAN AREAS NEAR THE BASE WHICH ARE PACKED WITH REFUGEES. NINE CIVILIANS, INCLUDING THREE CHILDREN, WERE KILLED, AND 34 WERE WOUNDED. TEN SOLDIERS WERE WOUNDED.

2. REFUGEES FLEEING QUANG NGAI TO CHU LAI WERE REPEATEDLY SUBJECTED TO AMBUSH ALONG THE WAY. CASUALTIES WERE HEAVY, BOTH AMONG CIVILIANS AND THE GVN FORCES ESCORTING THEM. THE ROAD IS A SCENE OF CARNAGE COMPARABLE TO THE "HIGHWAY OF HORROR" BETWEEN QUANG TRI AND HUE IN 1972.

PRESIDENT THIEU'S MESSAGE TO HIS COMMANDERS

IN A PERSONAL MESSAGE TO CORPS AND DIVISION COMMANDERS

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AND PROVINCE CHIEFS, PRESIDENT THIEU NOTED THAT THE SITUATION HAS REACHED A SERIOUS STAGE AND CIVILIANS AND MILITARY SHOULD BE PREPARED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT ALL MILITARY PERSONNEL LEAVING THEIR POSTS WITHOUT AUTHORITY WERE TO BE ARRESTED, TRIED AND EXECUTED WITHOUT FAIL.

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